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‘We do General Policing’: Sexuality in the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit of the Metropolitan Police Department, Washington, DC

I would be happiest when this unit does not exist. How fucking crazy is that? Right? Give up this good gig and go back to work on the streets where he should be. But to me that’s when we’ve succeeded. We’ve succeeded when people can look at this department and say ‘what the hell do they need a gay and lesbian liaison unit for?’ ‘Look at this department. Everybody is embracing diversity. Everybody is respectful to everybody.’ We’re not there yet (smirks). (Brett Parson speaking, Poole and Crandall 2005)

1. Introduction

Much of the history of homosexuality contains intimate narratives of police abuse. As state agents, the police are in position to influence people’s lives intimately. There are still deeply entrenched homophobic tendencies by the police towards homosexuals or those perceived to be homosexual.¹ For instance, ‘in the U.S., LGBT people continue to be targeted for human rights abuses by the police based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity’ (Amnesty International 2005, 3). In response to this the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, DC, (MPD) created the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU) to more effectively combat homophobia while promoting the MPD to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) communities. Even though the members of this unit go beyond hypermasculine and heteronormative readings of ‘a police officer,’ one may interpret their position as that. Are their positions as police officers and their ties to GLBT reinventing them as transgressive agents and,

¹ My use of *homophobia* comes from Leap (2004). In discussing homophobic formation in texts, he comments “a homophobic statement is something that expresses disdain, disgust or hatred for gay people, gay sexual practices, gay lifestyle or... for people who are believed to be gay and/or connected with gay lifestyle and gay sexuality” (2004). I believe that this can extend to how police officers might treat homosexuals.

if so, how might this inform their duties as police officers and their perceptions of homosexuality?

The purpose of this paper is to ascertain whether the GLLU is a transgressive agency. By analyzing literature on the police and homosexuality and presenting ethnographic data, I will discuss the intersections of their subject positions as police officers and as GLBT persons. As noted above, this project works with the contention that United States police forces are hypermasculine and heteronormative. Consequently, I will consider how these conflicts might influence the possible transgression of the unit.

To that end, I have divided my paper into five parts. First, *Research Methods* discusses the ethnography involved with researching police officers. *Police and the GLLU*, discusses the formation of the GLLU and how homosexual issues feature in police discourses. *Transgressive Sexuality* reviews the literature of transgressiveness and its applicability to the GLLU. *Intersections of the GLLU and Transgression* brings together the themes discussed in the first two sections in an effort to show the ways in which the GLLU reveals transgressiveness. Finally, the *Conclusion* discusses whether the Unit is a transgressive agency or not.

2. Research Methods

In relation to other anthropological (or even more broadly social scientific) materials, there is precious little on the relationships of the police officer subject position in the United States to homosexuality. Much of the resources reviewed in this paper are from international sources; I draw from mostly British sources due to their similarities to American law enforcement practices. While considering their perspectives is important, I do emphasize domestic sources more because of the uniqueness of United States police departments. This is evidenced in my attention spent on said resources in this project. Parallel to such research are the discussions specifically on transgressive sexuality. The research offered in this project does not exclude certain authors but rather emphasizes general themes evident in literature of transgression from a Foucaultian perspective.

My ethnographic data come from several encounters with GLLU members, with the first in May 6, 2004 and then July 22, 2005 up through the present. On August 24, 2005, I attended part of a GLLU monthly meeting at their Connecticut Ave NW Office, where all the officers and civilian staff come together to discuss issues concerning the unit. At this meeting, I discussed my broader research plans, offered my time as a volunteer and asked for support in my research. Despite some concerns with this project and my past research (i.e., Tobler 2005), I have moved forward with my project. In his research, Herbert (2001) found that police officers usually become 'friendly and helpful with time' despite earlier hesitation. From that I decided to focus my research right now on fewer individuals so I may build stronger relationships that might influence future encounters with both GLLU and non-GLLU officers. Working with a limited number at this stage in my research is also beneficial to the police officers, since it allows them the security my attention may offer. For the officers, knowing that I am working with them individually rather than casting an ethnographic net out simply to get all the data available reveals that I am sincerely concerned with their individual perspective. Indeed, in light of reports such as Amnesty International's (2005), it is absolutely critical that the police officers know that I am honest and trustworthy.

As such, I have concentrated my participant-observation at this time with fewer GLLU members rather than with all. This has primarily consisted of informal in-office interviews and then a *ride-along*. A ride-along refers to someone who accompanies an officer who is out on patrol. As with Herbert,

The ride-alongs proved more instructive than the interviews, for several reasons. First, (they) provided an opportunity to witness the actual workings of police geopolitics.... Second, (they) provided a focus for our interactions.... Finally, (they) provided time for me to develop rapport with the officers, a process assisted by my doing multiple ride-alongs with most of them (2001, 306).

Judging by officers' asking when I would ride with them again and willingness to do so, I presume that my presence was and is well received. If nothing else, my presence during an evening shift adds a good change to the work-day.

3. Police and the GLLU

3.1. General Background of Policing

It is the cop's job to use physical force... anyone who opposes cops must not, therefore, let them maintain the hypocrisy of disguising this force behind orders that have to be immediately obeyed. (Foucault as cited in Halperin 1995:23)

It is because of their conflicted positions and close proximity to most spaces² of peoples' lives that often make police officers contentious components of discourses involving the state. The United States' Supreme Court case of *Lawrence v. Texas* is a recent example of how police may enter a presumably private space and extend state authority vis-à-vis regulation of sexuality. Foucault himself had numerous encounters with the police through his activism; Halperin notes that Foucault even suffered a cracked rib during one such encounter (1995, 23).

Throughout the history of organized police departments there has not been a singular police force in the United States, unlike many other countries (Vago 2003, 129).³ While Foucault's encounters with police forces were most likely in European countries, North Atlantic perspectives on the police need contextualization in their respective nation-states. We have to be careful in over generalizing the thousands of police departments in the United States, especially when one discusses police discretion. Although discretionary power (power used intentionally) is an important feature of law enforcement, this essay does not presume that discretionary practices and policies are universal by any means. Vago observes that discretionary power is important not only to the police, but to 'the entire judicial process and the criminal justice system' (2003, 136). What informs an officer's discretion is not only their individual training and background but the context they work in; a police officer in Washington, DC, is most likely going to have a different perspective on discretion than an officer in a small town in Idaho.

² These spaces may be presumably public and private, social or physical, and so on. I would argue that the police are capable of directly or indirectly entering any space. Whether such entry is legal or not is another matter.

³ Vago (2003, 127) comments, 'The American colonists adopted the English system of law enforcement, and the first metropolitan police force was created in Philadelphia in 1833.'

One's experiences with race, ethnicity, and class will inform their relating to others, even in the 'black and white' world of policing (Field notes, May 6, 2004). For Sergeant Brett Parson, commander of the GLLU, 'Police officers are generally very polar people. It's either legal or illegal. It's either right or it's wrong. Yes or no. Good guy, bad guy. Man, woman, gay, straight. You're getting arrested or you're not getting arrested' (Intelligence Report 2003). Another observation by a GLLU officer during a ride-along was that the 'white community' uses the police 'to serve and protect' and the 'black community' uses the police 'for clean-up' (Field notes, December 9, 2005). Going along the racial lines, the officer also went on to comment, 'our cultures are different, man. It's funny but it's real. It's funny but it's real.'

Even with the GLLU, we need to remember that police discretion will affect how individual police officers relate to both the GLBT and non-GLBT communities. This is particularly evident in my ride-alongs with GLLU officers. For instance, during a ride-along I witnessed an officer's interaction with a driver and passengers who started to drive the wrong way on a one-way street (Field notes, September 24, 2005). Although the officer repeatedly honked and yelled at the driver to turn around, they did not. After a moment, the officer got out and asked why the driver was going the wrong way on a one-way street. Despite the clear lack of a reason why the driver drove in the wrong direction, the officer let them go. When I asked why, the officer said it was not worth the effort to ticket them.

Instances of discretion as the above officer's reveals the power the police have, whether it is in action or inaction. Davis states, 'the police are among our most important policymaking administrative agencies. One may wonder whether any other agencies – federal, state, or local – make so much policy that as directly and vitally affects as many people' (1975, 263). The selective power to enforce the law or not does put the police in a unique social position. When one considers the GLLU's additional mission – as liaisons to and from GLBT communities – we can begin to interpret the possible uniqueness of their relationships to these communities.

3.2. Literature Review of Gay and Lesbian Policing

3.2.1. International Research

All I want is a little more tolerance and understanding. I'm not dangerous to the community, but the community is dangerous to me – I know that because I've experienced it firsthand. And it's all to do with fear. I'm waiting for the day when this world is mature enough to deal with its fears instead of burning them at the stake. As for myself, if this group had been around when I was in the Job then I would probably still be in it now. I think it's a great idea. Especially for the young ones. Who else can a gay copper talk to? (Police Constable, Burke 1993, 219)

Researchers in the United Kingdom have produced much of the research on 'gay' and 'lesbian' cops.⁴ Burke's (1993) account of gay, lesbian and bisexual police officers' narratives provides an important source for such reflexivity, although these come from well over a decade old. The account above illustrates a constable's perception of the need for the Lesbian and Gay Police Association (LAGPA).⁵ Although such an organization offers more avenues of communication and support, it still does not incorporate active police work in with said avenues like the GLLU does. Additionally, Burke offers a variety of opinions of gay and lesbian police's takes on homosexuality and policing. Such accounts vary greatly; for instance, one states that

I think a fair amount of the criticism from the gay community is unfounded. Most of them don't have any direct experience with the police, be it good or bad, and they just share a handful of second-hand stories and experiences that are constantly passed around. It's kind of hand-me-down philosophy where gays coming onto the scene are taught that the police are homophobic and nasty before they've met one, which is analogous to

⁴ I say *gay* and *lesbian* intentionally because the following sources do not discuss bisexual or intersexual police officers in any meaningful way, which is unfortunate to the larger project here.

⁵ Formed in the early 1990s, the LAGPA sought "to work towards equal opportunities for lesbians and gay police officers, to offer support and advice for lesbian and gay officers (and) to work towards better relations between the police and the gay community" (Burke 1993, 212). They affirm this on their website as well (Gay Police Association 2006).

heterosexuals being taught that homosexuals are nasty, effeminate child molesters before they've even met one. (Police Constable, Burke 1993, 86-87)

This illustrates a generalized understanding of 'the gay community.' Indeed, it reminds us of Brett Parson's comments above (Intelligence Report 2003). Other narratives discuss how the police are to blame, whereas others note responsibility on both sides.

Cherney (1999) reviews relationships between Australian police officers and gay and lesbian communities. Albeit shorter than Burke's (1993) account, Cherney provides some insight into the Australian context. Here, we find gay and lesbian police officers reporting their concerns in voicing their sexual positions. For instance, a female respondent comments 'When hearing comments directed to other gay members I feel I'm unable to respond due to fear of either outing the individual or confirming what other members suspect. Responding can have adverse consequences' (Cherney 1999). Despite these concerns, we find that the respective police forces are making strides in bettering GLBT experiences on the job.

3.2.2. Research in the United States

There are a few social science studies of 'gay' and 'lesbian police' in the United States. In their surveys of gay and lesbian police officers in a large Midwestern city, Miller, Forest and Jurik (2003) suggest that such officers face both potential benefits and difficulties if they were to come out.⁶ With the former, their presence would 'challenge stereotypes' while the latter refers back to all the sufferings of said stereotypes (2003:379). It would appear that the onus to 'challenge' this particular heteronormative and hypermasculine stereotyping falls onto the gay and lesbian officers, as opposed to those who exercise such stereotyping. Similarly, Belkin and McNichol (2002) find that integration of gay and lesbian personnel did not adversely affect the San Diego Police Department. Perhaps because they are writing in a police journal, they frame their argument as to emphasize 'that the integration of open gay and lesbian personnel in law

⁶ The authors define "The concept of 'out' or 'being out'" as "that the respondent has personally acknowledged his or her own sexual orientation and that this status is known by others" (2003, 380).

enforcement need not undermine organizational effectiveness' (2002, 65). While they employ survey methodology, the authors do spend a great deal of time stating they did an extensive literature review.

Leinen's (1993) interviews of 41 NYPD gay police officers offer a more extensive analysis of the meanings associated with being a gay police officer. His research and analysis offers a much more in-depth look into the trials and tribulations of being a gay police officer. Like the previous two studies, Leinen (1993, 214) concludes that

The benefits of coming out, or at least increasing one's visibility as a homosexual, seem to reveal themselves throughout this study. Yet many, if not most, gay cops are pessimistic about what full public disclosure will bring. They tend to exaggerate the discomfort and social harm that would befall them should their secret sexual identity become known in their work world.... (In) the long run (disclosure) leads to both acceptance and integration into the police world for most gay cops.... (Not only for the individual) but to the larger gay and straight police population as well as to the wider homosexual community.

What concerns me about such conclusions is that they allude to conformity to *heteronormative* police communities. The burden is on the gay or lesbian police officer to come out for the benefit of themselves and others; this is quite similar to Miller, Forest and Jurik's (2003, 379) assertion of gay and lesbian officers 'challenging stereotypes.' While this does not mean that the authors imply that the gay and lesbian police officers need to either stay quiet or conform, there is a powerful political statement in not suggesting integration *with respect to one's sexuality*. Indeed, it allows for a view that there are *police officers* and then there are *gay/lesbian police officers*.

One of the recurring themes in discussions of the GLLU and recruitment (i.e., Hull 2005) is how to bring in a more diverse population (particularly gay black men). This is reaffirmed in a discussion with a GLLU member (Field notes, December 9, 2005). Buhrke (1996) provides various narratives of gay and lesbian police officers, including two MPD officers. Lynn 'Rosie' Rosenberg discusses her time in the military and then in the MPD. Although she provides some narratives of her struggling against homophobia, she ends her overall piece by stating, 'I think

the real issue for me was being a woman.... It's tough being a woman in a man's world; it's a cliché, but it's true' (Buhrke 1996, 57). In many aspects, her narratives are similar in their form to Coates (2002) in how she frames her heroic dealing with homophobia. She stands her ground and she calls out homophobia when she encounters it through others speech.

The other narrative in Buhrke (1996) is Sandy J. Austin's, at the time a 20 year veteran of the MDPC and her uncertainties of being a lesbian in the MDPC. Additionally, she discusses her reaction to Sager and Lewis' (1980) story detailing her filing a discrimination complaint with the MPD's equal opportunity office after her superior questionably removed her from undercover work. Sager and Lewis (1980) comment that 'She is the first acknowledged lesbian on the force (MPD), and has tried to contend with what she considers the fears and suspicions of fellow officers who do not know and cannot understand and of people who unfairly stereotype lesbians as hefty, bull-like women in denim jackets and army boots.' Allowing herself to 'come out' is for Sandy, 'the best decision I've made because I feel freer than I ever could've been if I wasn't out' (Buhrke 1996, 116).

While both narratives are well before the GLLU, they do reveal a general sense of the times for early open police officers. Their being women only compounded the matter, although I would imagine that many of the themes of isolation and uncertainty run parallel to their male counterparts as revealed in the non-MPD accounts above. Although there were gay and lesbian police associations to support gay and lesbian police officers, police departments had yet to bridge the gap that existed between GLBT communities and the police.

3.3. Overview of the GLLU

MW: What's different about being a police officer and being a police officer in the GLLU?

PARSON: The first thing I want to do is turn that question around and tell you what's not different. We're police officers just like any other police officers in D.C., with full jurisdiction and full investigative authority and arrest powers. We specialize in dealing

with the GLBT community. Other police officers may be assigned to the sex offense branch, the check and fraud unit, or school resource officers -- they each have a specialty and when issues come up in that particular subject area, they are called upon to assist. That's what we do in GLLU. We specialize in dealing with a community that has been traditionally under-served, disrespected and discriminated against. There are many ways that we serve that community, and probably the most important is that we do not just focus exclusively on community relations. We do general policing. (Bugg 2005)

In the above interview, we find a recurring theme in much of Brett Parson's public statements: that the GLLU is fully-functional police unit that 'specializes' in working with GLBT-communities. Certainly this is reinforced every time I ride with a GLLU member and I see their gun. The GLLU officially began in June 2000 (GLLU 2005) but truly became what it recognized today in 2001 when Brett Parson took command by a direct order by Chief Ramsey.⁷ Washington, DC's, GLLU is unique among police units throughout the nation in that it is really the only unit that will combine active police work and community-outreach. As through their mission, the GLLU will: provide training and education while supporting both the police and GLBT communities as to the others' positions, investigate crimes that are against and by GLBT persons, serve as a spokes-agent of the MPD and reach out to GLBT businesses, etc. throughout Washington, DC (GLLU 2005).

Let there be no question that GLLU members are busy. In my discussions with members, they are through and through police officers. However, it is critical that we not lose sight of the fact that they are positioned (whether it is 'true' or not) as either 'gay' or 'lesbian.' Brett Parson comments on this phenomenon in an interview:

Capital Pride 2001 was my first day on this job. I came into it with anxiety and hesitancy. Up until then, if you mentioned my name to anybody who knows law enforcement in the Washington area, the first thing they would say was, 'Man, he's a good cop. By the way, did you know that he was gay?' My fear, and it will continue to be my fear for as long as I'm in this job, is that that will change over the years to 'He's the gay cop. He used to be a

⁷ A more thorough history of the GLLU can be found in Ertner (2002).

really good cop.’ So I’m really fighting to make sure that this unit continues to do street level law enforcement and maintains the respect of our peers. (Bugg 2005)

Despite his notoriety as a police officer when he came to the unit, his narrative expresses the constant reminder that the perception of homosexuality might trump other facets of one’s self in the eyes of others. For instance, my research into homophobic formation in newspaper articles supports how public perceptions of homosexuality will often usurp an individual’s other ‘identifying’ conditions (Tobler 2005). In newspaper articles that report adult public sex between men for example, someone *is* a sexual deviant although that person *was* a good community member. The difficulty for the GLLU is exercising discourses that go beyond such stigmatized and ill-founded perceptions and offer both the MPD and GLBT communities subject positions for their benefit.

4. Transgressive Sexuality

Transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flaws of its passage, but perhaps also its entire space in the limit it crosses.... Transgression does not seek to oppose one thing to another, nor does it achieve its purpose through mockery or by upsetting the solidity of foundations; it does not transform the other side of the mirror, beyond an invisible and uncrossable line, into a glittering expanse.... Its role is to measure the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to arise. (Michel Foucault, *Transgressive Architecture* 2005)

In light of the discussions of police and the GLLU, now it is important to spend some time discussing the use of transgressive sexuality in this paper. Foucault argues that *transgression* is not an oppressive force or power. Rather, transgression is making aware the otherwise unaware. Not at the expense of the one’s agency, but to open a discursive space for readings that dominant agents seek to deny. This is not to imply that transgression is purely either a benevolent or

malevolent act. What we need to do is to contextualize the workings of transgressive sexuality so we can come to know what it means to a broader public anthropology project.

Problematizing the state is an effective place to begin in discussing the possible transgressiveness of the GLLU. Indeed, how the state influences discourses on sexuality are important as well. Before I do that, let me first comment further on my use of *ideology* above. Principally I turn to Althusser (1971) for understanding ideology. He comments, '*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, by the functioning of the category of the subject' (1971, 173). For the sake of brevity, I will simply observe that his example of hailing a man on the street (Althusser 1971, 175) serves to show how the unassuming nature of ideology reveals its power. The result of such ideological hailing is a subject and we 'constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition' (1971, 172). Rather than passively absorbing ideology, the officers in the GLLU – as everyone in any position – are actively recognizing subject positions. The question is if they are transgressing in such recognition or whether recognizing a GLLU member subject position is parallel to any other individual recognizing a particular subject position (which I will return to below).

As it pertains to the police, Althusser views the police as a Repressive State Apparatus (1971, 143). This contrasts with Ideological State Apparatuses, which include churches and schools for example (1971, 143). As implied by the name the former functions by violence and the latter by ideology, although neither is absolute. Moreover, both have secondary functions of the other informing them. The police need to perpetuate their positions to exist as institutions, to which Althusser comments, 'For example, the Army and the Police also function by ideology both to ensure their own cohesion and reproduction, and in the 'values' they propound externally' (1971, 145). It is necessary also to consider the witness (or witnesses) in the overall ideological processes. As it pertains to the GLLU, various audience agents (i.e., the police chief, the media, GLBT communities, etc) validate their recognition. The audience will validate whether the GLLU is truly *being* a gay and lesbian liaison unit, using their own readings of 'gay,' 'lesbian' and a 'liaison.' Appreciating this also supports the *active* agencies involved throughout this process, as opposed to a perception that these agencies are *passive*.

It is important to consider how the GLLU developed as a state agency. Some of the justification in forming the GLLU was as a response to a series of murders of transgendered

people in Washington, DC (Field notes, December 9, 2005). Binnie states, '(in) certain polities the nation-state is increasingly asserting itself as the protector of the rights of lesbians and gay men' (2004, 20-21). Returning to my earlier point of a lack of a unified police institution in the United States, this 'protection' may occur at the local level rather than the national.⁸ With respect to the reasons offered for the creation of the GLLU, I would be remiss to take for granted that such protection is purely a response to 'human rights.' In a discussion of protecting urban, gay locales from homophobic attack, Binnie comments on the economic reasoning involved with such state intervention (2004, 130). Indeed, 'campaigns to combat homophobic hate crime in these areas must be seen in the context of making these areas safer for investment' (Binnie 2004, 131). Having said that, I have no doubt that the GLLU members' reasons are for only helping others and doing their job well.

Informing this process is hegemony. Williams comments that

A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure. It is a realized complex of experiences, relationships and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. In practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular. Its internal structures are highly complex, as can readily be seen in any concrete analysis. Moreover (and this is crucial, reminding us of the necessary thrust of the concept), it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own (1977, 112).

There is support for Williams' comments when one couples them with the GLLU's discretion. As state agents, the GLLU does perpetuate state hegemony. The very creation and success of the GLLU does reveal that hegemony is a process. Moreover, that there is a clear relationship between hegemonic state and subaltern agents. This is particularly true in hegemonic perspectives on citizenship. Although her focus differs from this project, Ong (2003) recognizes the economic components of citizenship – and by extension – the state. By framing their arguments for a more complete citizenship, GLBT activists affirm their economic value (i.e.,

⁸ However, the governance situation in Washington, DC, does present a national/influence from Congress unlike other locales.

Ong 2003:267). Active protection of such communities reveals an appreciation such a position.⁹ Indeed, one might argue that for one to be in a position to transgress they will need some economic foundation so their transgression may have any political impact.

While it is necessary to remark on how economics may influence transgression, with the GLLU it is important to emphasize the central tenet of any possible transgression: sexuality. Relating regulation to sex, Foucault (1978:24-25) observes

Sex was not something to be judged; it was a thing to be administered.... In the eighteenth century, sex became a ‘police’ matter – in the full and strict sense of the term at the time: not the repression of disorder, but an ordered maximization of collective and individual forces.... A policing of sex: that is, not the rigor of a taboo, but the necessity of regulating sex through useful and public discourses.

From a Foucaultian perspective, we can surmise that the GLLU is merely the next step in such policing of sexuality and sexual deviants. By having those in ‘the community’ answer to the MPD, the police can in turn ‘regulate sex through useful and public discourses.’ However, this might imply that the GLLU members are basically pawns in this process. What does it say about their agencies and voices if they are mostly regulated by the state?

In observing the relationship between the state and subaltern, Gramsci (1971:182) writes ‘...the life of the State is conceived of as a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable (on the judicial plane) between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups.’ These processes form an equilibrium by which the ‘fundamental group’ exerts on so much power onto the ‘subordinate groups’ (Gramsci 1971:182). As my larger project into the GLLU examines, there might be a possible conflict with the former group to be the police as state agents and the latter group to be the police as GLBT agents. The police officers are not passively regurgitating hegemonic discourses while unconsciously suppressing GLBT discourses. There are continual negotiations between these subject positions, whereby the

⁹ I use Ong (2003) to make a point of how the state acts to perpetuate economics resources that are of benefit to the state and I do not presume to imply the “white, upper middle class gay man” stereotype.

GLLU members recognize a particular subject position informed by police and GLTB discourses.

From Wilchens' perspective, the GLLU does not *repress* but rather *produces* discursive power (2004, 62). This production of 'discursive power produces specific kinds of individuals, with specific bodies, pleasures, and sexes' (Wilchens 2004, 62). The GLLU is now not only at the intersection of police agency and GLBT communities but it can enforce state power while being a voice of GLBT persons. Their position enables them to demarginalize the police to GLBT communities.) Moreover, their position is one of authority that can demarginalize GLBT voices. Such margins are necessary to discursive power. Wilchens (2004, 71) notes, 'To clearly see discursive power at work, we need bodies at society's margins. Margins are margins because that's where the discourse begins to fray, where whatever paradigm we're in starts to lose its explanatory power and all those inconvenient exceptions begin to cause problems.' The GLLU displays complex negotiations of one's hegemonic position exercising power onto marginalized groups while considering their own (possible) hegemonic positioning. Such negotiation does not result in a hybrid social position, but rather one that has its own discursive formation.

The multiplicity of understandings by individuals is multiaccentuality, which considers that any word or sign is going to have many different understandings by individuals rather than one static definition or meaning.¹⁰ Obviously, those in the GLLU are going to have different interpretations of their subject positions. What is important to consider is how such recognitions of the GLLU affects the members' actions and interpellation of ideology. This recalls my previous discussion of police discretion. While they are in sense just police officers, they are also very visible and occasionally vocal members of GLBT communities. This harkens back to Binnie's (2004, 25) pronouncement that 'Homosexuality threatens to destabilize fixed categories of identity, which are fundamental to the fixity of identity within nationalism. However... it may no longer be sustainable to frame sexual dissidents' relationships to the state merely in terms of exclusion and repression.'

¹⁰ For understanding multiaccentuality, I turn to Volosinov who states 'Class does not coincide with the sign community, i.e., with the community which is the totality of users of the same set of signs for ideological communication. Thus various different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of the class struggle' (1973, 23).

5. Intersections of the GLLU and Transgression

If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contrevention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. (Douglas 1966, 35)

Does the GLLU transgress the normativity of the MPD? In the opening narrative of this paper, Brett Parson expresses his hopes for the GLLU. At the center of his hopes are the MPD and GLBT communities. If the GLLU exists to serve both GLBT communities and the MPD, how might the GLLU be a transgressive agency when transgressiveness '(measures) the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to rise' (Foucault as cited in Transgressive Architecture 2005). Can the unit be transgressive if it does not deviate from that position?

The scholarship regarding homosexuality and the police suggests that there is hostility by the police towards homosexuality whether it is within or out of the force. Bernstein and Kostelac (2002, 301) comment that 'the police are a particularly important group of social actors because of their roles as gatekeepers in the reporting of antigay/lesbian violence and because discrimination in a law enforcement setting can jeopardize the physical safety of lesbian and gay officers.' As gatekeepers, the MPD positions the GLLU as authorities of GLBT issues. There is a danger in this because it may allow state agencies to objectify GLBT communities under the guise of legitimate police authority. Indeed, this is counterproductive when it comes to this situation. Wilchens (2004, 62) observes that '(objectivity) is meaningless when it comes to gender and queerness because they very notion of queerness, the production of some genders *as* queer, and the search for their origin and meaning are *already* exertions of power.' If that is indeed the case and the GLLU is in place to check such 'exertions of power,' then there is a real danger if they deviate from their position.

The consequences of deviation can go beyond the immediate relationships between the police and GLBT communities. Additionally, non-MPD agencies (i.e., news media, community organizations) look to them as such gatekeepers into the police. Nodding to Althusser (1971), we see that these agencies recognize the GLLU as a police agency. The aforementioned legitimacy of the GLLU with GLBT communities only bolsters their position. Despite that, the fact remains that the unit is still a police unit. Wherever we go, the police officer subject position interpellates the officers. This interpellation comes through in their communication, observations and how they physically place themselves in any given public space.¹¹

As it pertains to sexuality, there is also a question as to how much the unit's officers recognize transgression. It would appear that the officers feel that have a connection with GLBT communities (Field notes, December 9, 2005). As the officer further explained, they share a common bond that simply exists from a shared experience. The officer commented that in a conversation with a GLBT person, they would 'get into their psyche' in an effort to help them. This is where discretion plays such an important role: the officer might not have to listen to the victim or offender. Amnesty International (2005) contains numerous anecdotes of ridicule or rejection of GLBT persons by police. Are the discretionary practices by GLLU members informed by their positions in the GLLU, or are more from their own personal experiences as a police officer?

Regarding the latter possibility, numerous sources cite Brett Parson's reaction to when someone posted a pornographic lesbian picture on his locker. (He retaliated by posting pornographic male pictures on the other 300-plus lockers in the room.) Occurring well before he worked with the GLLU, that appears to have been a transgressive act. With this particular contextualization, such an act is indicative of a transgressive sexual position. This act intentionally makes suspect hegemonic notions of not only what constitutes pornography, sexual and gender roles. In addition, it calls into question what makes an appropriate police officer and policing. Now with his command of the GLLU, his connections to sexuality are no longer restricted to his 'private life.'¹² With a presumed 'gay' sexuality out in public from a

¹¹ For instance, the officer will always position him or herself with a maximized view of the space. This is so they may watch others and so they can more secure themselves in that space.

¹² Although *private* and *public* are problematic, I use them from an assumed heteronormative position. Leap discusses that '(the) possibility of intrusion by police,... the pervasive presence of regulatory authority – all of these

heteronormative position, such an act might move from transgressiveness to one in line with his position. This has two important implications: first, the audience (heteronormative police agents) might not recognize actions by GLLU members as anything other than connected to their positions.

A particular situation from my field notes on December 9, 2005, illustrates this possible transgressive sexuality. The GLLU officer and I went to an African-American lesbian dance club in Northeast Washington, DC. Club Delta Elite is rather unassuming from the outside, although you can hear the thumping hip-hop music from the outside. We entered into a cramped enclosure where the officer exchanged pleasantries with the door staff, an older African-American man and a younger African-American woman. The club itself has various lights throughout the space and features a raised stage for performers. Truth be known, I feel it is safe to say that I was the only white person in the space and one of a few male-bodied individuals. The officer and I stood by the door, which did not surprise me given the officer's spatial-orientation practices (noted above). I am not sure whether anyone gave my presence any thought; indeed, most of the people looked past me as they entered. The most interesting part of the experience was the officer's actions throughout our time there. Lamenting that 'I can't drink,' visiting with friends and watching the dancing women at no time appeared to distract the officer from their position at that space: a police officer. Going to that lesbian space for a white, male-bodied person might be transgressive, however for the GLLU member it is part of their position. Any problematizing of the marginalization of the club by heteronormative discourses still fell under their position as a GLLU police officer.

6. Conclusion

During my ride-along with a GLLU member on December 9, 2005, I explained the topic of this paper. The officer replied quite abruptly that transgressiveness did not apply in their case. To paraphrase, 'being a police officer is the officer's job and the GLLU is their assignment' (Field

realities reframe the meanings of 'private' and 'privacy' as they apply to sites of sexual practice' and that 'all sites of sexual practice are public locations, and any claims to privacy which unfold there are fictional claims' (1999, 10-11).

notes, December 9, 2005). From the perspective of the police officer subject position, GLLU officers are not transgressive agents. Although the interjection of 'homosexuality' is in contrast with the hypermasculine, heterosexual discourses of said subject position, it is done so under the guise of a police officer's mission. However, this does not preclude that the officers do not transgress or exercise transgressive sexuality. Nor does this paper seek to ignore the aforementioned concept of multiaccentuality, whether it is from the GLLU position or not. Police exercising of discretion or having varying readings of a situation from a non-heteronormative subject position does not automatically mean that the discretionary act or reading is transgressive. While any given police officer or unit will exercise certain discourses surrounding discretion, this project contends that those of the GLLU do not qualify it as a transgressive agency even if 'its role is to measure the excessive distance that it opens at the heart of the limit and to trace the flashing line that causes the limit to arise' (Foucault as cited in *Transgressive Architecture* 2005).

To rephrase Douglas' (1966, 35) comment, we must be mindful that the GLLU is not 'matter out of place.' The officers in the GLLU are still police officers whose actions are informed by hegemonic discourses. While they might exercise transgressiveness at points and that broadens the potential of policing, it is not the hallmark of their positions. As they have pointed out (i.e., Poole and Crandall 2005 and Field notes, December 9, 2005), they perceive their positions in the unit as assignments that are finite. This does not appear to be a source of conflict, either. Here the officers are police officers who are openly GLBT or an ally, unlike many of the narratives of gay and lesbian police officers above. Moreover, there is a long list of applicants which suggests a certain hegemonic legitimacy (Field notes, December 9, 2005). This does not mean that the unit is completely appreciated by all in the MPD. As Brett Parson comments, 'we're not there yet' (Poole and Crandell 2005). Although there may be difficulty, the GLLU is now a police unit that can better serve both the police and GLBT communities with certain legitimacy.

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